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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 YEREVAN 001644

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
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STATE FOR EUR/CARC, EUR/ACE, EUR/PRA AND PM/RSAT
DEFENSE FOR OSD (DASD MacDougall)

E.O. 12958; N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PARM](#) [MASS](#) [MARR](#) [AM](#) [AJ](#)

SUBJECT: ARMENIAN ADVANCES WITH FMF AND IMET

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (ADDED SENSITIVE CAPTION)

This telegram is sensitive but unclassified. Please handle accordingly.

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: After years of pushing against our refusal to allow use of Foreign Military Financing (FMF to purchase communications equipment for the entire Armenian army -- including units stationed on the border with Azerbaijan -- the Armenian Ministry of Defense (MOD) has finally agreed to use the funding to outfit two units that are serving alongside coalition forces in Iraq and Kosovo. Armenia has always taken full advantage of the IMET program, however: The MOD has also achieved 97 percent utilization of Armenian IMET graduates since 2002. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) Until recently, the MOD had pushed hard to use FMF funding to outfit all of its ground troops with Harris radios - the continuation of an FY04 FMF purchase of USD 10 million in radios. Over the course of a series of bilateral meetings with the MOD, the Office of Defense Cooperation (ODC) was able not only to expand FY07 FMF purchases to materiel beyond communications equipment, but to convince the Armenians to use the money to outfit the two units that work closely with U.S. and coalition forces in Iraq and Kosovo: the 12th Peacekeeping Battalion and the Humanitarian De-Mining Unit.

¶3. (U) We began to make progress in moving the MOD away from its Harris radio fixation in FY06, when it began to purchase some tents, helmets, binoculars and body armor for the Peacekeeping Battalion. On October 6, the MOD agreed to our suggestion to increase its spending to fully outfit the Peacekeeping Battalion and Humanitarian De-Mining Unit, proposing to spend USD 5 million of the USD 8 million in FMF left over from previous fiscal years.

¶4. (U) The new equipment, which includes uniforms, field equipment and mission-specific equipment for Peacekeeping Battalion platoons, and De-Mining engineer personnel will improve those units' interoperability with U.S., coalition and NATO forces. In obtaining the new equipment, Armenia also will achieve one of the goals listed in its NATO Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP): IPAP 2.3.1; "create peacekeeping battalion." The funding also will provide technical training for the Peacekeeping Battalion's staff, and several of its platoons, and will establish a transition course for new recruits.

¶5. (U) The MOD's October FMF request will enable it to complete its Peacekeeping Battalion a full three years before its self-imposed IPAP 2010 target year. The early completion of this IPAP goal will further enable the MOD to increase its contingent in Iraq from

platoon-sized to company-sized units by early 2008 - which translates to a two-fold increase in personnel. The MOD also will be able to focus on infantry-specific peacekeeping and stabilization tasks, in addition to their current transportation mission with the Polish Brigade in Iraq.

16. (SBU) We project that FMF assistance will enable the MOD to increase its peacekeeping and stability platoon contributions to company size units by early 2008. The Armenian MOD is very interested in using FMF and IMET to fully equip the peacekeeping battalion ahead of schedule in 2007, and then to begin to train and equip a second peacekeeping battalion and a brigade staff as a move towards their envisioned peacekeeping brigade. Additional US funding would rapidly enable the MOD to achieve its IPAP goal of turning the peacekeeping battalion into a full brigade, and to increase its peacekeeping and stability platoon contributions to battalions, with an eye toward sending them to Iraq or possibly Afghanistan by 2009.

17. (SBU) The Armenian MOD also greatly values the IMET opportunities afforded it by the USG and has demonstrated this appreciation with excellent utilization of IMET-trained personnel. Since 2002, when IMET first began in Armenia, the MOD has sent 63 Armenian officers to U.S. military courses. To date, 43 students have completed IMET training and another 20 IMET students are currently attending training at U.S. military schools. Of the 43 Armenians that completed training, 40, or 93 percent, were placed in positions that corresponded directly with their IMET training. The two Armenian IMET graduates that are not in positions that directly correspond with their IMET training, are still serving in key leadership positions, making Armenia's overall IMET utilization rate 97 percent. IMET graduate utilization by the MOD in key positions in the 12th Peacekeeping Battalion or on the MOD and General Staff further support achievement of defense reform and IPAP goals.

COMMENT

18. (SBU) The Armenian MOD is now energized on the goal of building up to a full-fledged, NATO-interoperable Peacekeeping Brigade, and receptive to using FMF and IMET funding toward that end. Accelerated FMF funding would enable Armenia to reach this goal much sooner. Any such US offer to increase funding/capability should be tied to increased Armenian contingent size and firm Armenian

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (ADDED SENSITIVE CAPTION)

deployment timelines, as was done in Georgia with the Sustainment and Stability Operations Program (SSOP) in 2005. Post suggests that Armenian commitments be sought during the approaching OSD Bilateral Defense Consultations. Offering to train and equip an Armenian Peacekeeping Brigade in parity with Azerbaijan would balance the ground forces increase in the region. However, USG preconditions must first be met to ensure that these newly trained forces are not deployed to the line of contact between Armenia and Azerbaijan, are declared for NATO use, and deployed according to an agreed-upon timeline to benefit NATO and/or the Coalition over the course of eighteen months to two-years. The ODC will work with the MOD in the coming weeks to discuss optimum time lines, training and equipment requirements, and to explore U.S. assistance options for developing such a peacekeeping brigade.

GODFREY